

TYPOLGICAL SHIFT AMONG NEWLY MARRIED  
COUPLES FOLLOWING COMPLETION OF A  
MARITAL ENRICHMENT PROGRAM

By

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Bachelor of Arts

Oklahoma Baptist University

Shawnee, Oklahoma

2002

Submitted to the Faculty of the  
Graduate College of the  
Oklahoma State University  
in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for  
the Degree of  
MASTER OF SCIENCE  
December, 2004

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude and appreciation to the many people who have assisted me in the creation of this research project. First, I would like to thank Dr. David Fournier for his support, assistance and the hours of labor he contributed to making this project possible. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Charles Hendrix and Dr. Carolyn Henry, as they contributed not only their ideas but also their invaluable time to this process.

In addition to my professors, I would also like to thank my husband, family and friends who provided unending patience, support and love throughout the creation of this project. Their words of encouragement provided the inspiration and motivation to continue toward this goal. Most especially I would like to thank my parents who encouraged me to pursue my goals by believing in my abilities and sacrificing parts of themselves for my success.

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## Introduction

Within American society, marriage is one of the initial transitions across the family life cycle (Carter & McGoldrick, 1999; Rogers & White, 1993). Often accompanying the decision to marry is the belief that the marriage will not only be successful and also life-long. However, throughout the past thirty years the increased prominence of divorce within the United States (U.S.) has challenged the conceptualization of life-long marriages. For example, research from the U.S. Bureau of the Census suggests that the divorce rate increased during the 1970's, peaked during the 1980's, and began a slight decline in recent years (2000, Table 77). Despite small decreases in the rate of divorce, research also suggests that 40-50% of couples marrying for the first time will face divorce during their lifetime (Carroll & Doherty, 2003; Fowers & Olson, 1992). Other research has taken a slightly stronger position suggesting that one-half of all first marriages, and an even higher percentage of subsequent marriages, will end in divorce (Bramlett & Mosher, 2001).

In seeking to attain a greater understanding of the length and context surrounding the dissolution of marriage, researchers have also discovered that approximately two-thirds of the couples that divorce will do so within the first 10 years of marriage (Clark, 1995). By identifying the importance of the early years of marriage, researchers and practitioners seek to prevent marital distress and divorce through the integration of both developmental and intervention research related to marriage relationships. In creating a

conceptual framework for the prevention of marital distress and dissolution, current studies have narrowed the scope of continued research and practice by identifying the developmental period of interest as that of the transition from premarriage to early marriage (Carroll & Doherty, 2003). Identifying negative patterns of interaction and intervening within these early years of marriage is crucial to the prevention of future divorce.

A variety of approaches, including premarital counseling, couple and family therapy, as well as legislation have been implemented to reduce the rate of divorce. While research suggests that some of these approaches, including marital and couples therapy, increase marital satisfaction and improve marital quality, they often are both time consuming and costly (Dunn & Schwebel, 1995). In addition to these approaches, marital enrichment programs are an effective alternative to treating marital problems after they arise (Zimpfer, 1988). Zimpfer, for example, found enrichment programs to be highly effective (1988). Specifically, his research suggests that programs which teach communication skills and emphasize behavioral change are effective in improving marital satisfaction. Similar results were found by Guerney and Maxson through a meta-analysis of marital enrichment programs. Finding a moderate overall effect size, Guerney and Maxson concluded, “there is not doubt that, on the whole, enrichment programs work” (1990, p. 1133).

While enrichment programs are effective at any stage of marriage, many developmentalists believe that newlyweds represent the most propitious audience for enrichment programs (Hawley & Olson, 1995). Defined in this study as couples in their first year of marriage, newlyweds are not only past the idealism of the engagement period

but also face a myriad of developmental tasks and changes. For example, newly married couples establish their own marital system, form patterns of interaction, and develop conflict resolution skills. Utilizing this transition period, marital enrichment programs could intervene before couples are mired in years of conflict and distress, potentially reducing the high cost of unhealthy marriages and divorce.

### *Problem Statement*

The creation of a new couple system through marriage unites partners with distinct families of origin and expectations for marriage. During this period of transition, many problems related to this new system are likely to arise (Mattessich & Hill, 1987; Tallman, 2003). Resolving these early problems and differences between the two partners can have a profound impact on the fate of marriages (Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith & George, 2001; Karney, Bradbury, & Johnson, 1999). An increased understanding of these early marital challenges will enable professionals to intervene based on the individual couple's needs. There is a need for professionals as well as couples to have an increased knowledge of couple types, the challenges that face many couples as they transition into a new stage of the family life cycle, and the impact that each of these will have on later stability and satisfaction within the marital relationship.

### *Purpose*

The purpose of this study is to summarize the changes that result from participation in a 14 week marital enrichment program on couples within the first year of marriage and to explore the shift in couple typological analysis across 2 assessment periods (pre and post completion of the program). Using the scale scores from the ENRICH inventory (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1987), this study will discover the



efficacy of the marital enrichment program by reporting both the changes that occur during the first year of marriage. Typologies of the newly married couples created by Olson and Fowers (1993) will then be used to further analyze the primary changes that occur during the first year of marriage. Utilizing typologies to describe and inform research on newly married couples and marital enrichment programs, researchers seek to describe marriages by combining similar characteristics for analysis.

Studying newly married couples, marital enrichment programs, and couple typologies concurrently not only eases the conceptualization of complex human relationships but also begins to bridge gaps between theory, research, and practice. Through the generation of both intuitive and empirical research, the study of typologies has also led to criticism and limitations within the field of marriage and family therapy. Studying these 3 components, researchers seek to summarize and strengthen the base of research regarding the efficacy of marital enrichment programs with newly married couples. Additionally, the incorporation of typologies should not only better inform researchers but also assist therapists and educators as they seek to enhance and improve marriages.

Within the study, couple typologies will be identified using the results of the ENriching Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness Inventory (ENRICH) (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1987). Couple typologies are the grouping of couples into smaller, similar types based on similarities in their scores on the ENRICH Inventory. Additionally, the ENRICH Inventory will also be used to assess changes in the newly married couples across time. Examining shifts in both couple typologies and scores

across time will help couples and professionals to identify and strengthen growth areas early in their marriage, ultimately leading to increased marital satisfaction.

### *Conceptual Framework*

The integration of developmental and preventative research relies on the interplay between research, theory, and practice. Utilizing either an inductive or deductive process, research is often guided through inclusion of both theory and hypotheses. Many theories within the field of human development and family science can be used to understand the development of marriage as well as the individual and social influences that affect this process. However, two theories, General Systems Theory and Family Developmental Theory, are most closely related to the affects of marriage on couples as well as the additional individuals and family members involved.

A system, the fundamental element of General Systems Theory, is defined as a group composed of interrelated components and the shared relationship created by their interaction (Klein & White, 2002). A newly married couple, created through the joining of two people into a relationship through marriage, is an example not only of a relational system but also of smaller individual systems. Similarly, effective individuals and families, a marriage is also described and defined by Family Developmental Theory. As the first stage within Family Developmental Theory, marriage is a profound event that affects not only the individuals with the relationship but also their family members and friends. Both General Systems Theory and Family Developmental Theory will enhance research by providing a better understanding of newly married couples and assisting professionals in intervening during the early years of marriage.

### *General Systems Theory.*

General Systems Theory is governed by the concept of wholeness. This assumption suggests that a system “must be understood as a whole and cannot be comprehended by examining its individual parts in isolation from each other” (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993, p. 329). The components within a system are not only interrelated but also mutually influencing. Governed by wholeness, any alteration in one of the system components affects all the other components of the system. Additionally, the system is influenced by the environment and also influences the environment in which it exists (Klein & White, 2002).

In describing newly married couples, the marriage signifies the beginning of a new system. Together, the couple system exists and is distinctly different from both the individual systems and the individual characteristics that constitute the couple system. However, the couple system is also influenced by the characteristics of the components of the individual systems. For example, the couple system is influenced by the backgrounds and past experiences of both the male and the female. The interaction between the personal characteristics, previous experiences and the families of origin influence the ability to develop a new couple system and adjust to a new marriage.

Just as the individuals are also a part of the couple system, both the male and female remain a part of a family of origin or family system into which he or she was born. Newly married couples then must not only be aware of their individual characteristics but also how his or her partner’s family of origin could affect their couple system. Influenced by their individual characteristics as well as their previous family and life experiences, the male and the female both possess expectations or beliefs regarding the functioning or dynamics of their relationship. General Systems Theory utilizes the

term map to describe the partners' beliefs about their relationship. Defined as a consistent, although not immutable perception of reality, a map influences how new information will be interpreted. Pervading all attitudes of thought, a map influences not only which information is understood, but through the use boundaries, also defines information as unperceivable or incoherent.

The male and the female within the couple each possess a map for their marital relationship. Couples must evaluate and negotiate the differences between their maps to develop a shared meaning or definition for their couple system. Participation in a marital enrichment program should not only illustrate differences but also provide the opportunity for couples to resolve these differences through the development of new maps based on similar beliefs and expectations. Commonality of marital expectations could enhance marital satisfaction, as each partner is aware of the other's expectations for the couple system.

Within the couple system, the male and the female have the opportunity to control the level of interaction as well as flow of information both into and out of the couple system. All systems are regulated by boundaries and the flow of information, or feedback, through the system. Driven by the system's context, feedback promotes survival by not only regulating functioning but also aiding in adaptation. Positive feedback amplifies deviation and promotes organizational change by allowing new information into the system.

Feedback, or information flow, continues until the system reaches the maximum, tolerable level. At this point, negative feedback dampens or minimizes the deviation prompting the system to return to the previous level of functioning. New information may

yield a return to previous functioning, negative feedback; however, new information may also induce another change within the system, positive feedback. Newly married couples must establish their own couple system by adjusting their boundaries to regulate the flow of information. In addition to identifying differences in their individual maps, marital enrichment programs can also be a source of feedback into the couple system.

Responding to this feedback, the system can either amplify the deviation and change the organizational structure or dampen the feedback and return to the previous level of functioning. For example, the marital enrichment program could provide information that changes the couple's patterns of interaction and communication thereby increasing marital satisfaction. However, the feedback could be minimized by the marital system, leaving the couple unaffected by the new information.

#### *Family Developmental Theory.*

Family Developmental Theory was created to identify the successive developmental changes, including the roles and relationships within families, across the human lifespan. According to Rogers and Hill (as cited in Klein & White, 2002) a family is not a static entity; instead, a family system transitions through stages with the passage of time. While the stages within Family Developmental Theory are considered mutually exclusive for each family, the theory seeks to define the processes and stages within families that are similar. Evelyn Duvall, one of the initial contributors to Family Developmental Theory, described the transformation that occurs in families through the creation of eight stages, beginning with the creation of the institution of the family (Klein & White, 2002; Rogers & White, 1993). Despite recent changes to the family life cycle, Carter and McGoldrick (1999) continue to identify the joining of families through

marriage or the creation of a new couple system, as an initial stage in the development of a family.

Within the family life cycle, development or progression to the next stage is dependent on both the stage and the duration of time spent in the stage (Nichols & Pace-Nichols, 2000). For example, the longer a couple is in a dating relationship, the higher the likelihood that the couple will transition to the next stage of development, marriage. As a couple transitions to a new developmental stage, through marriage for example, they adapt to changes in family structure, roles, rules, and norms. A stage then is an integral of time in which the structure and interactions of role relationships in the family are both noticeably and qualitatively distinct from other periods of time (Rogers & White, 1993).

“A central task at this stage is to establish your own marital system, your own way of relating and dealing with various problems and processes of family life” (Lauer & Lauer, 2000, p. 344). As an individual transitions from being single to being married, he or she begins reworking rules, membership, emotional distance, and boundaries (Dankoski, 2000). Developmental changes alter not only personal experiences and larger relationships with the family but also create new positions such as husband and wife (Rogers & White, 1993). Each position within the family is accompanied by a set of roles and behavior expectations. The roles attached to each position are not only assigned by societal norms but also defined by one’s culture or family of origin. The position and roles within the family also affect the dyadic interactions within the family, including husband-wife relationship (Klein & White, 2002).

General Systems Theory and Family Developmental Theory help researchers as well as professionals attain a better understanding of the newly married couple’s

adjustment to marriage. During this time of transition, couples are asked to not only define but also to adjust to different roles, positions, expectations, and the development of a couple system. Couple typology as well as several of the couple's characteristics will affect their ability to successfully navigate this transition and establish a life-long marital relationship.

*Questions to be answered*

In integrating couple typology and adjustment to new marriage many questions still need to be answered within the body of literature. Some of these questions will assist professionals as they seek to enhance and assist couples in adjusting to being newly married. Other questions, however, will assist in the development, conceptualization and application of theory to newly married couples, while additional questions may be asked by couples seeking to ease their marital adjustment. For example, what factors surround the development of a new couple system and contribute to successful marital adjustment? What types of couples have more difficulty adjusting to being newly married? How is couple typology related to marital adjustment in newly married couples? Does participation in a marital enrichment program affect a couple's typology? If there are shifts in couple typology following participation in a marital enrichment program, will these changes remain constant? Will the couple's typology change across time? In an attempt to answer some of the aforementioned questions, the following hypotheses will be tested in this study:

Hypothesis 1: The typology of couples participating in the marital enrichment program will improve when compared to their typology prior to participation in the marital enrichment program.

Hypothesis 2: ENRICH positive couple agreement scores will be higher at completion of the marital enrichment program when compared to the scores prior participation in the program.

Hypothesis 3: Couples who complete the marital enrichment program will have higher communication and conflict resolution scores compared to their own scores prior to participation in the program.

Hypothesis 4: Couples who participated in the marital enrichment program will have higher marital satisfaction scores compared to their own scores prior to participation in the program.

#### *Definition of Concepts*

Within this study, *newly married couple* is defined as any couple within their first year of marriage. A *marital enrichment program* is “a systematic effort to improve the functioning of marital couples through educational and preventative means” (Zimpfer, 1988, p. 44). *Couple typologies* are developed when researchers group couples with similar characteristics together. The couple typologies used in this study, created by Olson and Fowers (1993), were based on the couple’s scores on the ENRICH Inventory. The five typologies include Vitalized, Harmonious, Traditional, Conflicted and Devitalized. *Improved typology* will be defined as a change in type that reflects an increase in interpersonal skills such as communication and conflict resolution.

Devitalized couples have the lowest scores on all of the ENRICH scales, with a majority having considered divorce. These couples’ scores demonstrate pervasive marital dissatisfaction. Similar to Devitalized couples, couples identified as Conflicted have moderately low scores across all of the ENRICH categories. However, Conflicted



couples place a greater emphasis on religion in their marital relationship than do Devitalized couples. Couples described as Conflicted score lowest in the conflict resolution and communication categories of the ENRICH. Traditional couples, distinct from Conflicted and Devitalized couples, are satisfied with how they perform their duties as parents. Additionally, these couples agree on the importance of religion and also possess above average scores on the marital satisfaction scale of the ENRICH Inventory. Harmonious couples have marital satisfaction scores that are only lower than the scores of Vitalized couples. Despite having high marital interaction scores, Harmonious couples typically are not in agreement on parenting related issues. Finally, Vitalized couples have higher levels of marital satisfaction than any of the other couple typologies. Having high scores in the marital interaction categories, couples in this typology are successfully communicate with each another, effectively resolve conflict and are satisfied with their partner's personality.

To answer to the aforementioned research questions and test the enumerated hypotheses, this project will begin by examining the relevant literature regarding newly married couples, marital enrichment programs and couple typology. By identifying the primary characteristics of newly married couples, this project seeks to assist professionals in designing targeted interventions to not only enhance marriage but also prevent divorce. Conducting a selected review of marital enrichment programs, the project will explore different types of interventions utilized by a variety of married couples. Finally, the project will introduce empirical couple typologies as an additional method of assessing change within couples across time.

## Literature Review

One of the initial developmental transitions for adults during the human life span is marriage. Following the creation of a new dyadic system, couples within the early years of marriage possess characteristics that are distinctly different from both the preceding and following stages of the human life cycle. As newlyweds, these couples face a myriad of important tasks and challenges in establishing their new marital system. For example, these couples negotiate the division of roles and responsibilities within the marriage, continue to nurture the development of their couple relationship and reestablish relationships with each member's extended family (Leonard & Roberts, 1998). Begun during the premarital stage of the relationship, many of these tasks continue into the early years of the marriage. During these years, couples establish interaction patterns that will affect the long-term quality and stability of the marital relationship (Tallman, 2003).

### *Description of newly married couples*

The characteristics of newly married couples reflect the transitional nature of their relationship. Despite being newly married, for example, these couples sometimes possess characteristics similar to premarital couples. Huston et al (2001) describe newly married couples as idealistic. Embellishing affection and avoiding conflict, newly married couples often view their partners in primarily positive terms. Similar to premarital couples, newlyweds are often satisfied with their relationship and possess high expectations for their marriage (Davila, Karney & Bradbury, 1999). In addition to

possessing some traits similar to premarital couples, newly married couples are also a reflection of the transition into young adulthood. The early marital relationship, and the formation of a new couple system, is typically defined as the primary attachment relationship for adults (Davila et al, 1999). Playing such a prominent role in the life of adults, the transition into being a newly married couple can have lasting effects on the marital relationship. As Tallman (2003) suggests, long-term marital outcomes can be contributed to the couple's success or failure in confronting and resolving their key interpersonal problems during these critical years. Utilizing a variety of research designs, models, and theoretical frameworks, researchers have sought to outline these developmental changes as well as the primary characteristics of newly married couples.

*Marital aggression.*

Disagreements are inevitable within marital relationships; however, the couples' ability to confront and address these disagreements has profound implications for the long-term satisfaction and stability of the marital relationship (Tallman, 2003). Attempting to address and resolve many of the development challenges that arise during early marriage, newlyweds often experience marital conflict that is not only frequent but also intense (Leonard & Roberts, 1998). Additionally, during this period, partners are faced with the merging of individual goals as well as the task of creating a viable and mutually satisfying marital unit (Tallman, 2003).

In some relationships conflicts between newly married couples include verbal aggression or withdraw from intense conversation (Lindahl, Clements, & Markman, 1998). However, in other relationships, conflict is more accurately described as marital aggression. The severity of physical marital aggression ranges from minor acts including

pushing or shoving to more intense levels of violence including hitting or “beating up” one partner (Leonard & Roberts, 1998).

Levels of aggression falling between the aforementioned endpoints of a marital aggression continuum are found not only within the context of marriage but also during the premarital phase of the relationship. Leonard and Roberts suggest that marital aggression is “quite prevalent both before and after marriage” (1998, p. 56). In a nationally representative sample, Elliot, Huizinga, and Morse (1986) found the 43% of females and 37% of males who were either married or cohabiting reported aggression against a partner during the last year.

This pattern continues into the first year of marriage as 29% of husbands and 30% of wives reported at least one incident of marital aggression by the husband within the first year of marriage (Leonard & Roberts, 1998). Similar results were found by O’Leary et al (1989), in which 27% of men acknowledged being aggressive within the first 6-18 months of their marriage. Aggression in this early period of marital development may establish dominance and interaction patterns that have implications for later marital functioning, even in the absence of later physical aggression (Leonard & Roberts, 1998).

However, the rates of marital aggression appear to decrease over the course of the lifespan for both men and women (O’ Leary & Cascardi, 1998). For example, when rates of physical aggression against a spouse for married couples over the age of 30 is considered, the prevalence in the past year for males and females is 5% (Straus & Gelles, 1986). Research by Lindahl et al (1998) also suggests a decrease in aggression over time as the couple’s ability to better handle conflict is demonstrated by decreases in verbal aggression and withdraw during disagreements. Possibly representing the period in which

marital conflict is not only the most frequent but also the most intense, the first years of marriage are critical in the developmental course of marriage (Leonard & Roberts, 1998). As such, marital conflict, and the ability to reconcile differences, may be an important determinant of marital intimacy, stability and satisfaction, particularly in early marriage.

*Marital satisfaction.*

Marital satisfaction is one of the primary characteristics examined in conjunction with newly married couples. The National Center of Health Statistics (1991) identifies the early years of marriage as critical for marital stability. Defined as typical, couples' appraisals of marital quality decrease during the first year of marriage (Leonard & Roberts, 1998; Kovacs, 1983; Kurdek, 1998; Markman & Hahlweg, 1993; Bradbury, Cohen, & Karney, 1998). In a longitudinal study of couples during the first 6 years of marriage, Lindahl et al (1998) identified consistent declines in marital satisfaction, with the steepest denegation occurring between the first and second years of marriage. This sharp decrease in marital satisfaction is attributed to many developmental challenges that newly married couples face.

Attributed to many relationship characteristics, Kurdek (1998) suggests that marital satisfaction declines as spouses negotiate issues of conflict and power within the marriage. Additionally, couples who experience decreases in marital satisfaction report developing strong feelings of ambivalence about their marriage and begin to see his or her partner's personality as less responsive (Huston et al, 2001). Similar research by Kurdek (1998) also suggests that lower marital satisfaction results when couples lack either the skill or motivation necessary to engage in relationship maintenance. Finally, dissipation of romance during the first year of marriage (Huston et al, 2001) and

discrepancies between the partners' expectations for marriage are also linked to decreases in marital satisfaction (Kurdek, 1998).

*Marital communication.*

Despite the common decrease in marital satisfaction, some couples experience positive changes in their relationship during the early years of marriage. One of the areas in which change can occur for newly married couples is communication. In a 9 year longitudinal study, Lindahl et al (1998) discovered that positive couple communication, including communication skills, validation, problem solving, and positive affect, is positively correlated with the length of marriage. Their research suggests that the quality of couple communication increases as the length of marriage increases. Noller and Feeney found similar results in their 1998 study. According to their research, couples reported having higher quality communication two years into their marriage than immediately following the beginning of their relationship.

While the pattern of communication can and does change with the length of the marriage, other research suggests that interactional patterns between couples often begin before and continue into the marital relationship. Seeking to create shared expectations of how the couple will interact, Huston et al (2001) suggest that interpersonal patterns are established during courtship and are maintained throughout the course of marriage. Additionally, Huston et al also suggest that many of the problems that arise during courtship continue into the marital relationship. Noller and Feeney (1998) found similar results when examining the development of relationships across the first two years of marriage. Their research suggests that couples who experience a great deal of premarital conflict report having lower quality communication during the first two years of

marriage. Noller and Feeney's (1998) research also proposes that destructive patterns of communication that contribute to problems within later years of the relationship develop premartially. The strong connection between premarital conflict, ineffective communication and aggression both before and after the creation of a new couple system illustrates the importance of both intervention and prevention of divorce during early marriage.

As a critical period in the development of the conjugal bond and the future outcome of marriage, the early years of marriage represent an opportune time for marital enrichment and intervention (Leonard & Roberts, 1998). During this time patterns of interaction, including communication and conflict resolution, are being negotiated and established. Veroff, Douvan, Orbach and Acitelli (1998), for example, identified patterns of communication as one of the primary interaction processes that develop during the early years of marriage. In addition to the introduction of interactional patterns, the decrease in marital satisfaction during the first few years of marriage also illustrates the importance of intervening in both the couple's patterns of interaction and communication (Lindahl et al, 1998). Finally, focusing on newly married couples enables researchers and practitioners to examine the very early stages of marital aggression.

The aforementioned research reveals several characteristics about newly married couples. Despite being idealistic about their future, newlyweds can have marriages that are characterized by aggression and conflict. However, the research also suggests not only the development of communication styles between couples but also the malleability of patterns of interaction within early marriage. During these years, marital interaction can perhaps be altered before the patterns of marital aggression are firmly entrenched or

prior to the marriage ending in divorce (Leonard & Roberts, 1998). A critical period of development within the couple relationship, during the early years of marriage couples can learn to resolve conflict, reconcile differences and communicate effectively. The necessity for early intervention is exemplified through Tallman's (2003) research, as he suggests that the effectiveness with which couples deal with their problems during the first two years of marriage influences the long-term stability of the union.

*Conclusion.*

Representing a variety of perspectives, professionals and researchers have created a myriad of models for both intervening and enhancing marriages. Kurdek (1998), for example, encourages a dialectic perspective in the prevention of marital distress. Specifically advocating for a cognitive behavioral approach in creating couple level change, Kurdek suggests that prevention should not only normalize the decrease in marital satisfaction during the early years of marriage but also provide a structured opportunity for couples to learn how to effectively handle the changes that inevitably will occur during marriage. Other researchers, such as Lindahl et al (1998), suggest that intervention should assist couples in regulating their own negative affect, including anger, frustration, mistrust, and resentment, as all of these characteristics can arise during marital conflict. The ability to better regulate individual emotions during an argument is believed by many to be the first step in resolving marital conflict. Leonard and Roberts (1998), for example, suggest that engaging in problem solving behaviors that are not accompanied by negative affect will enable couples to successfully manage the inevitable differences and conflicts couples face in early marriage.



A variety of programs have been created to address the needs of newly married couples. Some of these programs incorporate the cognitive behavioral approach for which Kurdek (1998) advocates. Others, such as the program identified by Lindahl et al (1998), place a greater emphasis not only on the regulation of emotion but also on the development of improved communication and conflict resolution skills. Seeking to assist newly married couples in establishing successful, healthy marriages, researchers have selected or combined a variety of the aforementioned approaches into programs that serve to prevent divorce. Often described as marital enrichment programs, these programs are one of the primary methods utilized by professionals to intervene in the lives of newly married couples.

#### *Marital enrichment programs*

Research on marital enrichment programs is diverse, resulting in a multitude of classification systems based on the program's method of intervention or the use of a theoretical framework. Remaining consistent with the body of literature, the same principles guide the organization of this review. The first example of a marital enrichment program is Marriage Encounter. Not only popular but also highly debated, Marriage Encounter, in the absence of a theoretical framework, combines theology with an emphasis on strengthening marital relationships. Presented to large groups of adults over a weekend, Marriage Encounter teaches that love is an action and not a feeling. This marital enrichment program encourages participants to encounter themselves, their partner, God, and the world. Through ten to fifteen minute lectures and written dialogue between partners, couples are encouraged to experience trust and acceptance (Diskin, 1986).

The incorporation of religious beliefs, rather than theory, into a marital enrichment program has sparked both controversy and a vast array of efficacy results. DeYoung (1979), for example, criticized Marriage Encounter for the strong emphasis on theology and the lack of emphasis on crucial topics. Despite agreeing that the enrichment program did improve his marriage, DeYoung also criticized that women were subjugated to positions of secondary leadership behind that of men. In agreement with DeYoung's criticism, research conducted by Doherty and Walker (1982) stated that the intensity of the weekend was overwhelming for some couples, leading to an increase in marital conflict and a diminished capacity to solve problems. Other research, however, strongly contradicts both DeYoung (1979) as well as Doherty and Walker (1982).

Milholland and Avery (1982) found that after participation in Marriage Encounter that trust and marital satisfaction were greater for participants than couples in the control group. Similarly, longitudinal research conducted by Lester and Doherty (1983) found that 80% of couples reported having positive experiences at marriage encounter, with the most positive aspect being the expression of feelings.

In contrast to the program previously delineated, another marital enrichment program incorporates aspects of communication theory into skills training and behavioral change. The Couple Communication Program (CCP), formerly the Minnesota Communication Program, for example, seeks to increase concise, open communication between marital partners. During weekly three hour sessions, participants observe presentations, learn about themselves, and practice newly acquired communication skills (Brock & Joanning, 1983; Diskin, 1986).

Through the use of self-report measures and behavioral ratings, Joanning assessed the long-term effects of the Couple Communication Program on marital partners (1982). Using a pre-test, post-test, and follow-up design, all couples showed significant changes in marital adjustment and communication quality between pre-test and post-test. However, the follow-up assessment revealed that while couples had maintained their post-test levels of communication skill, they had regressed to pre-test levels of marital adjustment.

In addition to intervening via theological premises or the alteration of communication skills, another domain of marital enrichment programs emphasizes conflict resolutions skills as well as communication. Training in Marriage Enrichment, also known as T.I.M.E., is a 10 week enrichment program based upon an Adlerian theoretical perspective (Hawley & Olson, 1995; Dinkmeyer & Carlson, 1986). A systematic approach, T.I.M.E. focuses on developing mutual respect between marital partners and provides the opportunity to learn and apply a variety of skills, including the identification and alignment of goals as well as accepting responsibility for individual behaviors. The proponents of T.I.M.E. believe that possessing these skills will enable couples to survive future relationship challenges.

Using four instruments, including the Marital Self-Evaluation (MSE), Marital Communication Inventory (MCI), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), and Relationship Change Scale (RCS), and both treatment and control groups, Mattson, Christensen, and England assessed the effectiveness of T.I.M.E (1990). Through this research, T.I.M.E. was shown to have a positive effect on the treatment group's perception of their marriage. Specifically, the treatment group showed an increase in consensus based on the DAS and

perceived greater changes in their relationships as compared to the control group based on the RCS.

The Systems Marriage Enrichment Program is the final example, in this review, of diversity amid enrichment models. Based upon the principles of Systems theory, this enrichment program utilizes the principles of group process to illustrate the reciprocal nature of marital interaction as well as highlight both strength and work areas for each couple (Elliott & Sounders, 1982). Using the principles of Systems Theory, the leaders of this program enhance the participants' communication and problem solving skills while the marital partners design and implement behavioral changes. Distinct from the other enrichment models, the Systems Marriage Enrichment Program combines a strong link to family theory with an emphasis on behavioral as well as insight oriented changes.

#### *Conclusion.*

Participation in a marital enrichment program provides couples with an educational opportunity to not only learn but also enhance their communication skills and knowledge of their partner's perspective. Unique to each couple, marital enrichment programs enable couples to be more equipped for marriage. Building upon the suggested efficacy of marital enrichment programs, continued research and additional analysis also offer the opportunity for more accurate intervention. Typological analysis, for example, would further inform researchers and practitioners as they seek to design marital enrichment programs that target the primary areas of interest for newly married couples. As Stanley suggests, "the goal of divorce and marital discord prevention is to enhance protective factors that are associated with successful adjustment" (Stanley, Markman, St. Peters, & Leber, 1995, p.392). Utilizing marital enrichment programs with newly married

couples provides the opportunity to intervene and alter potentially negative patterns of interaction before they are firmly established within the marital system, reducing the possibility of marital dissatisfaction, instability, and divorce.

### *Couple Typology*

In addition to the implementation of marital enrichment programs, another procedure, couple typologies, is also used by researchers to both assess and intervene during the early years of marriage. Couple typologies are the grouping of couples with similar relationship qualities and patterns of interaction. Researchers identify several different types of couples and then compare and evaluate their differences using a variety of variables. Providing an opportunity to “bridge gaps between theory, research, and practice,” typologies are one type of classification system often used to ease the conceptualization and understanding of social phenomena (Olson & Fowers, 1993, p. 196). Typologies, an important conceptual tool, have benefits for both researchers and practitioners. For example, empirical typologies synthesize large quantities of data into smaller, similar types reducing the time required for labor intensive comparisons (Lavee & Olson, 1993).

Based upon couple data, rather than individual variables, empirical typologies provide direction for theory by combining the most relevant variables between marriages for comparisons (Olson, 1981). Typologies also help to create a “common language between researchers and clinicians by linking clinical descriptions with theoretical formulations” (Lavee & Olson, 1993, p. 325). Using typologies to describe couples is important because researchers are able to synthesize and accurately represent the multidimensional characteristics of marriages by encompassing the whole relationship

rather than small clusters of information. Therefore, research on couple typologies provides a different level of evaluation. Rather than examining individual shift in scale or items scores, typologies provide a global assessment of the shifts in relationship functioning. The information provided by couple typologies allows for the creation of interventions that are targeted where newly married couples require the most assistance.

Researchers recognized the utility of using typologies to describe the marital relationship during the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. While early typologies were based upon intuitive data, more recent typologies have been created using both quantitative data as well as various aspects of the marital relationship (Olson & Fowers, 1993). Recognizing the fallacies of intuitively based typologies, researchers have sought to use empirical research to identify similar characteristics within couples. A myriad of typologies have been created through both intuitively and empirically driven research utilizing a variety of instruments and systems of classification.

Gottman (1994) for example created typologies based upon the couple's pattern of interaction, including the intensity and frequency of arguments. Using this information, Gottman (1994) created five different couple typologies, validating, volatile, avoidant, hostile/engaged and hostile/detached. Couples described as validating were able to acknowledge the validity of his or her partner's position despite potentially disagreeing with their idea. Additionally, these couples also had a developed style or pattern of conflict resolution that typically enabled them to successfully negotiate compromise (Gottman, 1994). In contrast to validating couples who value communication and verbal expression, volatile couples do not attempt to empathize or understand their partner's position. Additionally, rather than creating a compromise, these couples often fight to be

declared the winner of the argument. The third typology identified by Gottman was avoidant (Gottman, 1993). Often lacking the skills necessary to resolving conflict in the relationship, these couples often minimize the conflict that exists and avoid differences rather than creating resolutions.

In addition to the aforementioned typologies which Gottman (1994) considers stable, he also identified two unstable couple typologies, hostile/engaged and hostile/detached. Hostile/engaged couples have fights that are characterized by name-calling, insults and put-downs by one or both partners. Both hostile/engaged and hostile/detached couples have extremely negative fights; however, hostile/detached couples are primarily uninvolved with each other emotionally (Gottman, 1993). The hostile/engaged and the hostile/detached couples had a greater tendency toward divorce or marital dissolution than do the validating, volatile or avoidant types of couples previously defined.

Snyder and Smith (1986) created four couple typologies and a conceptual framework to describe sources of marital distress within couples. Seeking to not only describe similar couples but to also expound upon the current field of research, Snyder and Smith (1986) created a five-cluster model of both men and women. Types I and II reflected non-distressed relationships characterized by individuals who deny even minor marital difficulties. Additionally couples within these two categories reported greater flexibility and sharing of traditional marital and parental sex roles.

In contrast to Snyder and Smith's types I and II, types IV and V suggest extensive marital distress. Specifically, these couples report discontent with the quality of leisure time, deficits in problem solving, and disagreement about finances. Type III couples are

the most statistically diverse. While both men and women reflect moderate levels of stress, there was discrepancy between the areas of contention. Men, for example, reported greater distress in resolving marital disagreements and childrearing, while women were more likely to identify challenges in effective communication and time spent together. Providing an initial conceptual framework, Smith and Snyder's typologies describe the sources of marital distress within couple relationships.

Similar to Snyder and Smith (1986), Fowers and Olson (1992) sought to describe couples by analyzing the results of the PREPARE inventory. Including many aspects of the couple relationship, the typologies created by Fowers and Olson (1992) incorporate idealistic distortion, realistic expectations about marriage, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equalitarian roles, and religious orientation. Using these categories, Fowers and Olson (1992) created four distinct types of couples: Vitalized, Harmonious, Traditional and Conflicted.

Vitalized couples possess the highest overall scores on all of the scales within the PREPARE except for realistic expectations and religious orientation. Having the high scores in all of these categories, Vitalized couples also have the highest overall relationship quality. Vitalized couples are very comfortable discussing their feelings and are often able to resolve problems together. Described as possessing a moderate overall relationship quality, the second couple typology is Harmonious. Distinct from Vitalized couples, Harmonious couples have lower scores in several of the PREPARE categories including religious orientation and children and parenting. These couples tend to score high on the intrarelationship scales including communication and conflict resolution.



These couples are able to express their emotions to one another but often possess unrealistic expectations of marriage and have not created a shared definition of their roles as parents or reached a resolution on child-related issues (Fowers & Olson, 1992).

The final two couple typologies have characteristics that are different from both the Vitalized and Harmonious couple previously defined. Despite possessing low scores on intrarelationship scales such as personality issues and communication, Traditional couples have the highest scores of any of the typologies on the realistic expectations, religious orientation and children and parenting scales. Additionally, these couples' strengths included their ability to make decisions and plan for the future. The final typology, Conflicted couples had consistently low scores across all of the PREPARE categories. Described as having relationship difficulties, Conflicted couples scored particularly low in several intrarelational measures include communication, conflict resolution and sexual relationship. Finally, these couples were typically dissatisfied with their partner's personality and expressed discontent with their ability to communicate and resolve differences (Fowers & Olson, 1992).

Seeking to not only evaluate but also demonstrate validity for the couple typologies created by Fowers and Olson (1992), Fowers, Montel and Olson (1996) conducted a three-year follow up study examining marital outcomes of the four previously identified couple typologies. Finding support for the validity of the couple typologies, Fowers et al (1996) concluded that a linear relationship exists between marital satisfaction and couple typologies. Having the lowest level of marital satisfaction, Conflicted couples were more than three times as likely to have cancelled their wedding plans and also comprised nearly half of the separated or divorced couples identified in the

follow-up study. While the vitalized couples had the highest level of marital satisfaction, traditional couples were the least likely to have separated or divorced. Couples in both the Traditional and Harmonious typologies had moderately high levels of marital satisfaction. In contrast, Traditional couples placed a greater emphasis on marital stability and the formal aspects of marriage, while Harmonious couples were more focused on their interpersonal process and relationship satisfaction. A comparison of all four couple typologies reveals distinct differences in the couples' characteristics including their level of marital satisfaction and rates of instability (Fowers et al, 1996).

In addition to using typologies to describe premarital couples, Lavee and Olson sought to create typologies that would describe married couples using the ENRICH Inventory (1993). Similar to the typologies used to describe premarital couples, Lavee and Olson's (1993) typologies incorporated multiple dimensions of the marital relationship. Specifically, the researches evaluated the relationship along 10 different categories including personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equalitarian roles, and religious orientation. The seven typologies created in this study include Devitalized, Financially Focused, Conflicted, Balanced, Harmonious, Traditional and Vitalized.

Five of the 7 typologies, including Vitalized, Harmonious, Traditional, Conflicted and Devitalized, identified in the Lavee and Olson (1993) study were replicated by Olson and Fowers (1993). Two of the typologies, Financially Focused and Balanced, were not replicated in latter study. Financially focused couples were primarily dissatisfied with their marital relationship; however, they were in agreement on how their money should

be managed. In contrast to Financially Focused couples, Balanced couples possessed the capacity to communicate with one another and also had above average agreement in several categories including children and parenting, leisure activities and sexuality.

Using the same 10 categories as Lavee and Olson (1993), Olson and Fowers (1993) described couples as Vitalized, Harmonious, Traditional, Conflicted, or Devitalized. Vitalized couples had the highest level of marital satisfaction of all the typologies. Couples within this typology tended to score highest on the marital interaction scales, were comfortable communicating with his or her partner and resolved conflicts effectively. Similar to Vitalized couples, Harmonious couples had moderately high marital interaction scores; however, these couples' had markedly lower consensus on items related to parenting. In contrast to the couples previously described, Traditional couples scored slightly above average on items assessing marital satisfaction and interaction. Additionally, these couples tended to be the most satisfied of all couples with tasks related to children and parenting and also high levels of agreement on religion and realistic expectations.

The final two typologies identified by Olson and Fowers (1993) are Conflicted and Devitalized. While couples in both of these typologies exhibited low scores, Conflicted couples tend to have a greater consensus on egalitarian roles and the role of religion in relationships. However, their lowest scores were on the communication and conflict resolution scales reflecting difficulties within their marital interaction. Finally, the Devitalized couples exhibited the lowest scores on the scales within the ENRICH inventory. Despite being pervasively dissatisfied with their relationship, Devitalized

couples were less concerned about their sexual relationship, extended families, and roles within the relationship.

In describing the five types of marriage, Olson and Fowers' (1993) sample consisted primarily of European-Americans. Recognizing the limited ability to generalize these results to individuals of different backgrounds, several researchers have sought to replicate the couple typologies with different ethnic groups. Allen and Olson (2001), for example, sought to determine if African American marriages exhibit relational patterns or types that were similar to the primarily European-American sample. In Allen and Olson's study, five types of African American marriages were found which were similar to those identified by Olson and Fowers (1993). The similarities between these two study groups led researchers to utilize the nomenclature assigned in the Olson and Fowers (1993) study; however, some differences between the two samples were found. For example, in Allen and Olson's (2001) study the mean positive couple agreement (PCA) scores were lower on several relationship scales including personality issues, communication and conflict management than in the Olson and Fowers (1993) study. Additionally several differences between the typologies were more pronounced, as the African-American couples experienced larger declines for children and parenting in the Vitalized and Harmonious categories.

Asai and Olson (2004) also sought to discover the efficacy of using typologies to describe couples from other ethnic backgrounds. Making cultural adaptations, including the creation and implementation of the family cooperation scale rather than religious orientation category, researchers adapted the PREPARE Inventory for use with the Japanese population. In conducting their research, Asai and Olson (2004) discovered that

4 Japanese premarital types were similar to those used to describe the U.S. premarital couples. For example, Japanese and U.S. premarital couples had very similar Vitalized and Conflicted couple typologies. For both the Japanese and U.S. couples, Conflicted couples had the lowest number of PCA scores, with Vitalized couples having the highest.

While similar to U.S. Harmonious and Traditional couples, Japanese couples also differed on several characteristics in these categories. For example, the Japanese couples scored moderately high on the family cooperation dimension of the Harmonious typology, indicating the importance of parents and in-laws to the marriage. In the Traditional typology, Japanese and U. S. couples also had some similarities as well as differences. U. S. couples in this typology placed a higher emphasis on religious orientation, while Japanese couples had higher PCA scores in the sexual relationships category. In both the Japanese and U. S. samples, the Traditional couples had lower PCA scores on the interpersonal categories, such as communication and conflict resolution, of the PREPARE and higher scores on the relational dimensions including family and friends. These and other similarities between the couple typologies for both the Japanese and U. S. samples attest to the “convincing evidence that the four Japanese premarital types were similar to the types found by Fowers and Olson” (Asai & Olson, 2004, p. 422).

## Methodology

This quantitative study included 80 newly married couples, as well as 13 couples in a comparison group, who completed a marital enrichment program in a university setting between 1990 and 2000. As part of the enrichment program, the couples completed the ENRICH Inventory. The design for this study is ex-post facto as the data being analyzed was collected and scored previously. Also within this study, both correlational and descriptive research will be done using portions of an existing national ENRICH database.

The ENRICH Inventory is a self-report questionnaire completed by both partners simultaneously. The unit of analysis for the research includes both individual and couple levels. Both descriptive and correlational, this study will describe the sample and also examine the relationship between the completion of a marital enrichment program and couple typologies across time. The information from this research will be used to provide professionals with additional knowledge to enhance relationships and construct more effective marital enrichment programs.

### *Sample*

The participants in this study were 93 newly married couples, 186 individuals who participated in a marital enrichment program at a small, urban, Christian university in a Midwestern state. The study group sample consisted of 80 couples, while the comparison group was comprised of 13 couples. All of the individuals who agreed to

participate in the program remained through the two data collection points. However, two of the comparison group couples dropped out of the study prior to the post-test analysis. To participate in the marital enrichment program, the students had to be newly married, enrolled at the university, and participate in the marital enrichment program with his or her spouse. The couples voluntarily participated in the marital enrichment program, which was offered as a fourteen week course by the university. Couples completed the ENRICH Inventory one month prior to the beginning of the program. The participants met weekly for 2.5 to 3 hours each session. Weekly, in-depth lessons were created for each of the 13 content areas of ENRICH with one week to summarize the program. During the sessions, the couples discussed each subject area, participated in activities and practiced skills exercises to enhance that area of their relationship. In the time frame of this study both the weekly lessons and the course instructor were the same.

#### *Sample demographics.*

The study group sample for this research included 93 newly married couples who completed the marital enrichment program between 1990 and 2000. The mean age for men in the study group was 21.4 years (range 19-32, SD = 1.6). Females were slightly younger, with a mean age of 20.8 years (range 18-30, SD = 1.7). All but one of the male participants in the study, 98.9%, and 100% of women reported being in their first marriage. The study group sample also primarily consisted of Caucasian Americans (93.5% of men and 98.9% of women); however, 2.2% of men identified themselves as African American and 3.2% as Native American. Only one of the females in the study identified herself as African American (1.1%). In addition to being primarily ethnically homogeneous, the study participants also reported similar religious preferences. For

example, 66.7% of men and 69.9% of women identified their religion as Christian, while 12.9% of men and 9.7% of women selected other protestant. Also many of the participants, 16.1% of men and 17.2% of women, reported being affiliated with a religion not articulated on the inventory.

In contrast to the previously delineated statistics, the level of income for this sample is more diverse. For example, 55.9% of the females within this sample fell within the category no income to \$4,999, while 40.9% of men made between \$5,000 and \$9,999. Similarly, 5.4% of women and 12.9% of men within the sample group made between \$10,000 and \$14,999, while 5.4% of men and 2.2% of women were in the \$20,000 to \$29,999 category. Additionally, the category consisting of \$30,000 and \$39,999 included 1.1% of men and 1.1% of women, while the category consisting of \$15,000 and \$19,999 included 6.5% of men and 9.7% of women. For a complete list of sample demographics related to the study group sample who completed the ENRICH Inventory, see Table 1.

#### *National ENRICH Sample.*

The national ENRICH sample utilized within this study consisted of 4,311 couples who completed the inventory between 1990 and 2000. In contrast to the study group sample, there is more variability within the national ENRICH sample. The mean age for men in the study group was 34.8 years (range 18-94, SD = 10.6), while females were slightly younger, with a mean age of 33.0 years (range 17-88, SD = 10.1). The national ENRICH sample is also more religiously diverse than the study group participants.

Within the national sample, 36.2% of men and 34.0% of women identified themselves as Catholic, while 24.4% of men and 24.3% of women identified their



Table 1  
Sample Demographics - Study Couple Participants

Variables	Study Couples (Males)		Study Couples (Females)	
	Frequency	Percentages	Frequency	Percentages
Age	$\bar{X} = 21.4$		$\bar{X} = 20.8$	
18	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
19	2	2.2%	12	12.9%
20	16	17.2%	28	30.1%
21	41	44.1%	30	32.3%
22	17	18.3%	13	14.0%
23	8	8.6%	3	3.2%
24	0	0.0%	2	2.2%
25	3	13.9%	0	0.0%
26	1	1.1%	0	0.0%
30	0	0.0%	2	2.2%
32	4	1.1%	0	0.0%
Missing	1	4.3%	0	0.0%
Education				
Graduate/Professional	2	2.2%	2	2.2%
Four Year College	10	10.8%	12	12.9%
Some College/Technical	70	75.3%	74	79.6%
Finish High School	10	10.8%	4	4.3%
Missing	1	1.1%	1	1.1%
Race				
African American	2	2.2%	1	1.1%
Caucasian	87	93.5%	92	98.9%
Native American	3	3.2%	0	0.0%
Missing	1	1.1%	0	0.0%
Marital Status				
Married: first time	92	98.9%	93	100%
Missing	1	1.1%	0	0.0%
Income				
\$0 - \$4,999	31	33.3%	52	55.9%
\$5,000 - \$9,999	38	40.9%	24	25.8%
\$10,000 - \$14,999	12	12.9%	5	5.4%
\$15,000 - \$19,999	6	6.5%	9	9.7%
\$20,000 - \$29,999	5	5.4%	2	2.2%
\$30,000 - \$39,999	1	1.1%	1	1.1%
\$40,000 - \$49,999	1	1.3%	0	0.0%
Religion				
Christian	62	66.7%	65	69.9%
Baptist	1	1.1%	1	1.1%
Episcopal	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
Other Protestant	12	12.9%	9	9.7%
Not Listed	15	16.1%	16	17.2%
Missing	3	3.2%	1	1.1%

religious preference as Christian. Another area of departure between these two groups is the constituents' income levels. For example, 5.4% of females and 24.7% of males in the national sample fell within the category no income to \$4,999. The category \$20,000 and \$29,999 consisted of 16.8% of females and 20.9% of males, while 10.4% of men and 18.6% of women fell within the \$30,000-\$39,000 category. Similarly, 7.4% of women and 11.0% of men within the sample group made between \$10,000 and \$14,999, while 5.8% of women and 12.1% of men were in the \$50,000 to \$74,999 category. Finally, the category consisting of \$75,000 or more included 7.23% of men and 3.3% of women.

Despite the aforementioned contrasts between the study group and the national sample, some similarities between the groups can be found. For example, the majority of the constituents of the national ENRICH sample also reported being in their first marriage (79.8% for both males and females). Both the study group sample and the national ENRICH sample also primarily consisted of Caucasian Americans (90.7% of men and 91.0% of women). A complete list of demographic characteristics for the national ENRICH sample is reported in Table 2.

### *Instrumentation*

The ENriching Relationship Issues, Communication and Happiness (ENRICH) Inventory was created by Olson, Fournier, and Druckman (1987) as an assessment for married couples seeking to either enhance couple relationships or facilitate the process of marital therapy. The purpose of the ENRICH inventory is to identify both strength and growth areas of each couple taking the questionnaire. An assessment of functioning at both the individual and couple levels, either the therapy process or plans for relationship

growth can be tailored to the couple's specific needs, creating the most effective level of intervention.

Table 2  
Sample Demographics of National Participants

Variables	Female National Sample		Male National Sample	
	Frequency	Percentages	Frequency	Percentages
Age	$\bar{X} = 33.0$		$\bar{X} = 34.8$	
17-19	78	1.8%	16	0.4%
20-25	1073	24.9%	910	21.0%
26-30	741	17.2%	673	15.6%
31-35	756	17.7%	807	18.6%
36-40	665	15.4%	698	16.2%
41 or older	884	20.8%	1093	25.2%
Missing	110	2.6%	114	2.6%
Education				
Graduate/Professional	553	12.8%	892	20.7%
Four-Year College	1083	25.1%	1176	27.3%
Some College	1835	42.6%	1519	35.2%
Finished High School	659	15.3%	527	12.2%
Some High School	90	2.1%	85	2.0%
Other	8	0.2%	14	0.3%
Missing	83	1.9%	98	2.3%
Race				
African American	70	1.6%	91	2.1%
Asian American	49	1.1%	40	0.9%
Caucasian	3924	91.0%	3912	90.7%
Native American	34	0.8%	63	1.5%
Hispanic/Latino	121	2.8%	114	2.6%
Other	61	1.4%	44	1.0%
Missing	51	1.2%	45	1.0%
Income	1066	24.7%	233	5.4%
\$0-\$4,999	407	9.4%	276	6.4%
\$5,000-\$9,999	473	11.0%	317	7.4%
\$10,000-\$14,999	390	9.0%	354	8.2%
\$15,000-\$19,999	724	16.8%	900	20.9%
\$20,000-\$29,999	450	10.4%	800	18.6%
\$30,000-\$39,999	244	5.7%	481	11.2%
\$40,000-\$49,999	250	5.8%	522	12.1%
\$50,000-\$74,999	142	3.3%	312	7.2%
\$75,000 or more	165	3.8%	116	2.3%

*Validity and reliability.*

The ENRICH Inventory has been found to have high levels of reliability and validity. First, the items within the instrument were created through an extensive study of the literature on topics often found to be problematic in marriages. Additionally, these items not only encompass marriage as a whole but also identify specific dimensions within the marital relationship. Therefore, the instrument demonstrates face validity as the items assess the concepts they are designed to measure within the inventory. Similarly, the ENRICH Inventory also demonstrates concurrent validity as the items within the questionnaire correlate significantly with the Locke-Wallace Marital Adjustment Scale, a classic instrument of marital satisfaction (Olson, Fournier, & Druckman, 1998).

In addition to validity, the ENRICH Inventory also demonstrates high reliability. Tests of both internal consistency and test-retest reliability have suggested the reliability of the ENRICH Inventory. The average internal consistency for the ENRICH Inventory is reported at .81 ( $n=1,542$ ), while for the test-retest reliability the average of all the dimensions is .86. More specifically, the test-retest reliability ranged from .77 (Leisure Activities) to .92 (Idealistic Distortion and Sexual Relationship) in a sample of 115 individuals (Fowers & Olson, 1989). The aforementioned numbers not only represent appropriate levels of reliability but also support the dependability and consistency of the ENRICH Inventory (Fowers & Olson, 1989; Olson, et al 1998).

The ENRICH Inventory consists of 125 items related to eleven different dimensions within the marital relationship. Answers are created using a five-point Lickert type scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Identifying positive and

negative agreements between the constituents of the couple, the ENRICH Inventory does not prescribe correctness to the answers selected by either the male or the female. Instead, through the analysis of fourteen scales, the ENRICH Inventory seeks to identify both strength and growth areas within each couple. The eleven dimensions, each comprised of 10 items, include personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, financial management, leisure activities, sexual relationship, children and parenting, family and friends, equalitarian roles, religious orientation, and marital satisfaction. The other three dimensions, each consisting of five items include idealistic distortion, marital change, and marital cohesion. The following describe each of the fourteen scales:

*Idealistic distortion.*

The ENRICH Inventory measures the unrealistic expectations of couples during marriage as well as the couple's tendency to respond to the questions based upon what society would deem acceptable. Individuals who have high scores on the idealistic distortion scale possess extremely unrealistic expectations for marriage. These couples, for example, may not have the ability to identify potential problematic areas within their marital relationship. In contrast, lower scores within this scale suggest that the individual has a more realistic understanding of their marriage, allowing him or her to more accurately assess and address issues that arise in the relationship. An example of an item in this category is: My partner and I understand each other completely.

*Marital cohesion.*

The marital cohesion scale assesses the connection or closeness the partners' feel in relation to each other. The level of cohesion in a marriage is an integral component of how the partner's interact with each other. Additionally, this dimension also assesses the

couple's ability to balance the separateness and togetherness within the relationship. A sample item from this category is: My partner and I feel very close to each other. Higher scores within this category reflect more closeness or connection between the couple; whereas, lower scores reflect either disagreement between the couple's perception of their relationship or an imbalance between their separateness and togetherness.

*Marital adaptability.*

The marital adaptability scale examines the amount of stability or change in the couple relationship. High scores in this category reflect more variability or change within the couple system, while low scores suggest more stability in the relationship. Family members compromised when problems arose: is an example of an item in this scale.

*Personality.*

Another integral component of the marital relationship is how one views his or her partner's behavior and interaction with others. This category assesses an individual's satisfaction and contentment with the personality traits and social behavior of his or her partner. Promptness, personality characteristics, and the use of substances are examples of some of the items within the personality scale. An example of a question within this category is: Sometimes I am concerned about my partner's temper. Similar to other scales, high scores reflect satisfaction with one's partner, personality, and behavior, while lower scores suggest feeling uncomfortable with his or her partner's personality or behavior.

*Communication.*

Combining multiple aspects of the communication process, this category reflects the partners' attitudes concerning the expression of feelings within the relationship. This

scale not only reflects the partner's attitudes but also allows individuals to discuss the differences in their styles of communication. Specifically, couples have the opportunity to converse about the discrepancies between their perceptions of their partner's communication skills. The items in this scale focus on the effectiveness of communication reported by partners during emotional and cognitive interactions. Higher scores within this dimension suggest that a couple has the ability to express their feelings and also feel heard by their partner. Conversely, couples with a lower level of satisfaction and differences in their communication styles have lower communication scores. It is very easy for me to express all my true feeling to my partner: is an example of an item on this scale.

*Conflict resolution.*

The purpose of this category is twofold. First, the items within this scale measure the couple's ability to determine if conflict exists within the relationship. Additionally, this scale also assesses the couple's ability to resolve conflict effectively by focusing on the strategies used to end arguments as well as their willingness to recognize and confront conflict. Evaluating the process of dealing with conflict, the questions in this category examine the feelings of each partner and the level of satisfaction with the resolution. An item included in this scale is: In order to end an argument, I usually give in too quickly. Couples who struggle with the ability to resolve conflict or avoid all aspects of conflict receive lower scores within this category. In contrast, couples with higher scores in the conflict resolution category are more satisfied with the process by which conflicts are handled and also have realistic views regarding the role of conflicts within the marital relationship.

### *Financial management.*

Focusing on spending patterns and economic issues within the relationship, this dimension assesses the couple's feelings related to their management of financial resources. An item within this scale on the ENRICH Inventory is: Sometimes I wish my partner was more careful in spending money. Other topics addressed within this category include the process by which financial decisions are made, the management of money and debt. While high scores suggest that a couple is satisfied with their current financial situation and their ability to manage resources, low scores not only reflect dissatisfaction but also differences between the partners' beliefs regarding money and spending habits.

### *Leisure activities.*

The items on the leisure activities scale examine both individual and couple preferences for how the members of a couple spend their spare time. For example, these items assess whether the couple will spend extra time alone or together, socially or at home. Another topic within this category is the similarity or differences in the individual's interests. A sample question from this category is: I sometimes feel pressured to participate in activities that my partner enjoys. Lower scores on this scale reflect disagreement in how the couple spends their spare time or differences in the current management of leisure time. Couples who can successfully negotiate leisure time by finding a balance between spending time together and separately score higher on this scale within the ENRICH.

### *Sexual relationship.*

Attitudes regarding sexual issues and behavior, sexual fidelity, and birth control are examples of topics included within the sexual relationship category. Also included in



this dimension are the amount of affection in the relationship and the ability to communicate about sexual issues. I am completely satisfied with the amount of affection my partner gives me is an example of an item found within this dimension. Lower levels of satisfaction in the sexual relationship and disagreement concerning any of the aforementioned topics lead to lower scores within this category. In contrast, agreement concerning affection and attitudes surrounding sex are not only associated with higher satisfaction but also high scores within this dimension.

*Children and parenting.*

The children and parenting dimension of the ENRICH Inventory focuses on the couple's attitudes and feelings about having and raising children, discipline and the impact of having children on the marital system. In answering the questions within this category, couples identify the number of children they would like to bear, answer questions related to parental roles and distinguish the ultimate goals for their children. Disagreement on the topics within this category leads a couple to receive a low score in this category. However, agreement between partners on areas related to child rearing correlates with higher scores. We have discussed and agreed upon how our children should be disciplined, is an example of an item within this scale.

*Family and friends.*

The questions with the family and friends category explore feelings and concerns about relationships outside the marriage. The attitudes surrounding one's own family, future in-laws and the level of comfort with both partners' friends are the focus of this category. Additionally, time spent engaged in activities with family and friends is also addressed by this scale. An example item within this dimension is: Some relatives or

friends have concerns about our marriage. Low scores in this category reflect problematic relationships or concerns regarding influence from family and friends, while high scores are obtained when both partners feeling comfortable with the other's family and friends.

*Equalitarian roles.*

The role relationship dimension examines an individual's feelings and beliefs regarding marital and family roles such as husband, wife, mother and father. The items identify and compare the level of couple agreement on items such as occupational, gender, household and parental roles. Within this category emphasis is placed upon similarities and differences between the husband's and wife's responses rather than the specific scores of the couple. High scores, for example, indicate an equalitarian role relationship, while low scores suggest a more traditional division of roles within the marriage. A sample question is: I believe the woman's place is basically in the home.

*Religious orientation.*

The characteristics within the religious orientation scale are important because spiritual beliefs create additional expectations for the marital relationship. The religious beliefs held by the individual as well as the meaning and value placed on religious practices are some of the topics examined within this dimension. Religion has the same meaning for both of us, is an example of an item on this scale. Similar to the equalitarian roles scale, the emphasis in this category is placed upon the level of agreement between partners' responses regarding religious beliefs and practices. High scores in this category are indicative of more traditional religious beliefs and low scores suggest less traditional approaches to religious issues (Olson et al, 1998).

*Marital satisfaction.*

The marital satisfaction dimension of the ENRICH Inventory creates a global assessment of the couple's satisfaction with their marital relationship. An item representing each of the 10 categories is included in this scale. Research demonstrates high reliability and good correlations with overall scores on the ENRICH.

### *Couple Typology*

Different typologies have been created to classify couples using the ENRICH Inventory. For example, Lavee and Olson (1993) and Olson and Fowers (1993) both used the ENRICH Inventory to create different typologies of marriage. While Lavee and Olson (1993) created seven types of marriage using this instrument, Olson and Fowers (1993) classified couples into five typologies. The couple typological analysis used in this study will be based upon the ENRICH typologies created by Olson and Fowers (1993). This version of the typologies was selected for several reasons. First, the five types of couples created by Olson and Fowers have been used in outcome research to examine the stability of marriage over time (Fowers, et al, 1996). Additionally, this research further justified and differentiated between the types of marriages originally identified. Finally, the decision to use the five types of couples in this study reflects the decision made by the ENRICH authors to use Olson and Fowers typologies in the 2000 version of the ENRICH inventory.

The typology for each couple is identified in the counselor report of the ENRICH. The five couple types, Devitalized, Conflicted, Traditional, Harmonious, and Vitalized, were developed by Olson and Fowers (1993). Devitalized couples have the lowest scores on all of the ENRICH scales, with a majority having considered divorce. These couples' scores demonstrate pervasive marital dissatisfaction. Similar to Devitalized couples,

couples identified as Conflicted have moderately low scores across all of the ENRICH categories. Couples described as Conflicted score lowest in the conflict resolution and communication categories of the ENRICH. Traditional couples, distinct from Conflicted and Devitalized couples, are satisfied with how they perform their duties as parents and agree on the importance of religion within the relationship. Harmonious couples have marital satisfaction scores that are only lower than the scores of Vitalized couples. Despite having high marital interaction scores, Harmonious couples typically are not in agreement on parenting related issues. Finally, Vitalized couples have higher levels of marital satisfaction than any of the other couple typologies. Couples in this typology successfully communicate with each another, effectively resolve conflict and are satisfied with their partner's personality.

Within this study, the typologies were created through the comparison of the PCA scores on each of the eleven areas of the ENRICH Inventory to the types of marriage found by Olson and Fowers (1993). To determine couple typology, PCA scores are created by calculating the percentage of items on a given scale in which the couple agrees on that aspect of their relationship in positive terms. Couples are placed in typology through the use of hierarchical agglomerative cluster analysis and k-means cluster analysis.

Using two groups, both cluster analysis and cross-validation were used to determine the goodness of fit between the couple's responses to the questions and the typologies. The goodness of fit formula compares the number of PCA items for each couple to the norm for each of the five ENRICH typologies. After calculating the distance between the typological norm and the couple's PCA score, the typology which is

closest to the norm is assigned to the couple. Finally, the identified couple typologies were also compared with demographic variables including education and income (Olson & Fowers, 1993).

The couple typologies will be used to assess both change and stability in marital relationships across time following completion of the marital enrichment program. More specifically, examining the scales and the items within the scales that change across time, researchers and educators will be able to more effectively detect and intervene within the most problematic areas of marital relationships.

### *Procedure*

The ENRICH Inventory was administered to the program participants at two different periods pretest (one month before beginning the program) and post-test (after completion of 14 week enrichment program). Each participant was asked to complete a demographic data form as well as the ENRICH Inventory during the pretest phase of the study. Both the ENRICH and the demographic data form were completed in a classroom setting. While the ENRICH Inventory afforded researchers a glimpse into each couple's relationship, the demographic data form provided researchers with distinct information including previous counseling experiences, background data on the couples' families of origin and specific details about the date of the couple's wedding.

Using a thematic approach, each week the couples were provided with thorough coverage of one the 14 scales on the ENRICH Inventory. A component of the learning experience, the couples were asked to not only discuss but also explore each of the areas identified on the ENRICH by participating in activities, practicing relationship skills, and identifying specific techniques to enhance that portion of their relationship. During the

initial week of the program, each couple was given the pretest results of the ENRICH Inventory. Included with the results were a summary of individual scores for each ENRICH scale, a list of each partners' response by category, couple scores (identifying positive couple agreement, couple disagreement, couple indecision, and negative couple agreement), as well as the couple's potential growth and strength areas within the relationship.

Following the initial administration, ENRICH was also dispensed after the conclusion of the 14 week marital enrichment program (post-test). Filling out the inventory during the final week of the enrichment program, participants were in the same classroom setting as the original ENRICH assessment. The aforementioned procedures describe how the data analyzed in this project were gathered between the years 1990 and 2000. However, no new data were collected as a part of this project; instead, additional statistical analysis will be conducted on the existing data set. Specifically this project summarizes previous research regarding the efficacy of marital enrichment programs and also extends these results through exploration of typological analysis and change across time. Since this study uses an existing data set, no new human subjects were solicited; therefore, no additional IRB approval was required.

#### *Data Analysis.*

An integral component in this research, frequencies will be used to determine the number of couples within each couple typology. Tables will be created identifying demographic information, the number of couples within the various couple typologies and both the scales and items within the scales that lead to changes in typology across time. Ultimately, the tables created will enable professionals to develop more focused,

process-oriented literature for marital enrichment programs, ultimately assisting couples in developing more satisfying relationships.

## Results

### *Hypothesis 1*

The first hypothesis suggested that the typology of couples participating in the marital enrichment program would improve when compared to their typology prior to participation in the marital enrichment program. In testing this hypothesis, the researchers explored changes on both the couple and individual levels. Exploring the couple level analysis first, the researchers examined each couple's typology as identified on the counselor report of the ENRICH Inventory. Of the 93 participants (including the study couples and the control group), nine couples were placed in the Devitalized type, 25 couples were Conflicted, 44 couples were described as Traditional, three were identified as Harmonious and twelve scored in the Vitalized type. Table 3 displays the frequencies and the break down of couples between typologies.

Table 3  
Distribution of Couples within Typologies

Variables	National Sample		Study Couples	
	Frequency	Percentages	Frequency	Percentages
	n = 4,311 couples		n = 93 couples	
Couple Typology				
Devitalized	1221	28.3%	9	9.7%
Conflicted	1067	24.8%	25	26.9%
Traditional	1179	27.3%	44	47.3%
Harmonious	307	7.1%	3	3.2%
Vitalized	511	11.9%	12	12.9%
Missing	26	0.6%	0	0.0%



Table 3 also compares the typological analysis of the study couples to a national ENRICH sample. In both of the groups, the number of Conflicted couples represents approximately 25% of the sample, while the percentage of Vitalized couples was also similar between the two groups (11.9% of the national sample, and 12.9% of the study couples). Finally, the number of Harmonious couples accounted for the smallest typological percentage in both samples. Despite these similarities there are also differences between the two samples. For example 47.3% of the study couples and 27.3% of the national ENRICH sample were identified as Traditional. Additionally, in contrast to the sample of study group couples, a larger percentage of the national ENRICH sample was identified as Devitalized (28.3%). However, these differences can largely be attributed to characteristics of the study group sample. Consisting not only of newly married couples but also of students enrolled in a Christian university, the number of Traditional couples is higher than average while the number of Devitalized couples is smaller than the national sample.

Following the identification of each couple's typology, researchers then sought to identify the shift in couple typology after completion of the marital enrichment program. Researchers began this analysis by identifying the couple typologies after completion of the marital enrichment program. Including both the study couples and the control group, 93 couples were identified in this analysis. Distinct from the typologies at Time 1, three couples were classified as Devitalized at Time 2 and 6 couples were described as Conflicted. Additionally, 28 couples were Traditional, four scored in the Harmonious type, and 50 couples were identified as Vitalized. The couples' typologies, including

frequency and distribution, following completion of the marital enrichment are shown in Table 4.

Assigning each typology a number (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5), researchers then calculated the quantitative difference in the couple typology by examining changes in absolute value before and after the completion of the marital enrichment program. Subtracting each couple's typology at Time 1 from their typology at Time 2 created the couples' overall change score after completion of the marital enrichment program and provided the analysis for the first hypothesis, (couple typology at completion of the marital enrichment program will improve when compared to the typology prior to participation in the marital enrichment program).

Table 4  
Study Couples and Control Group Typology at Time 2 (n = 93)

Typology	Frequency	Percentage
(1) Devitalized	3	3.3%
(2) Conflicted	6	6.4%
(3) Traditional	28	30.1%
(4) Harmonious	4	4.4%
(5) Vitalized	50	53.7%
Missing	2	2.1%

The calculation describes several types or degrees of change as well as the possibility of no change for each couple. A shift in typology of four is created as a couple changes from Devitalized (1) to Vitalized (5). A change of three can be created through two different shifts in couple typology. Shifts of three can occur as a couple changes from Devitalized to a Harmonious (4) or from Conflicted (2) to Vitalized. A third type of

change can also occur between Times 1 and 2. Couples can shift from Devitalized to Traditional (3), from Conflicted to Harmonious, and from Traditional to Vitalized.

Couples can also experience of shift in typology of one through four different configurations. This shift is accounted for by any change of typology. Finally, a couple's typology can remain constant between Time 1 and Time 2 or shift in a negative direction. For example, a couple could have been identified as Traditional at Time 1 but be conflicted at Time 2. Although a negative shift, the use of absolute value continues to quantify this shift as a change of one.

Within this study, all of the aforementioned typological shifts occurred. Two of the 93 couples within this study experienced a change of four between Time1 and Time 2. Both of these couples where Devitalized at Time 1 and Vitalized at Time 2. Nine couples underwent a change of three. Eight of these nine couples shifted from a couple typology of Conflicted to a typology of Vitalized, while one couple's typology changed from Devitalized to Harmonious. These findings are reported in Table 5. Additionally, 31 couples in the study experienced a typological shift of two following completion of the marital enrichment program. Twenty-seven of these thirty were Traditional at Time 1 but Vitalized at Time 2. One of these 30 couples changed from Devitalized to Traditional, and three couples experienced a typological shift of Conflicted to Harmonious. Additionally, 15 couples in this study experienced a typological shift of one. Nine of these 13 couples shifted from Conflicted to Traditional; three couples changed from Harmonious to Vitalized, and three couples shifted from Devitalized to Conflicted.

All of the aforementioned couples experienced a positive shift in couple typology ranging from one to four. In addition to these participants, some of the study couples

experienced either no change or a negative shift in typology. Twenty-four of the study couples, for example, did not experience any change in typology, while one couple shifted from Traditional to Conflicted and another couple's typology changed from Conflicted to Devitalized. Table 6 records the types of shifts that occurred in each category.

Table 5  
Total Change in Study Couples and Control Group between Time 1 and Time 2

Shift in Value of Couple Typology	Frequency	Percentage
$\Delta 4$	2	2.2%
$\Delta 3$	9	9.7%
$\Delta 2$	31	33.3%
$\Delta 1$	15	16.1%
$\Delta 0$	31	33.3%
$\Delta -1$	2	2.2%
Missing	3	3.2%

(n = 93)

Besides the couple level analysis, individual analyses were also used to investigate this hypothesis. Specifically, researchers identified individual changes between Times 1 and 2 on both the scale scores and select individual items within the ENRICH Inventory. Using t-tests to analyze the difference in means between Time 1 and Time 2, researchers identified 15 out of 125 items, all of which had significance levels of  $p < .001$  or higher, to reflect the largest overall change. In testing the hypothesis, the researchers also examined the difference of means in which the couples experienced a typological shift of two.

In the overall analysis, the biggest difference ( $t = -5.99$ ,  $p < .001$ ) occurred on item number 10. Within the conflict resolution category of ENRICH, this item states, My partner and I have different ideas about the best way to solve our disagreements. Several

other significant changes were also made on conflict resolution items. For example, item numbers 39 ( $t = -5.02$ ,  $p < .001$ ), 58 ( $t = -4.82$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and 112 ( $t = -4.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ) all suggest increases in a couple's ability to more successfully resolve arguments. Item 39

Table 6  
Study Couples and Control Group Typology at Time 2 (n = 93)

Study Couple Typology Shift	Frequency	Percent*	Control Group Typology Shift
$\Delta 4$			
$\Delta 1 - 5$	2	3.7%	0
$\Delta 3$			
$\Delta 2 - 5$	8	14.8%	0
$\Delta 1 - 4$	1	1.8%	0
$\Delta 2$			
$\Delta 3 - 5$	26	48.1%	1
$\Delta 2 - 4$	3	5.5%	0
$\Delta 1 - 3$	1	1.8%	0
$\Delta 1$			
$\Delta 4 - 5$	3	5.5%	0
$\Delta 3 - 4$	0	0.0%	0
$\Delta 2 - 3$	9	14.8%	0
$\Delta 1 - 2$	2	3.7%	1
$\Delta 0$			
$\Delta 5 - 5$	6		4
$\Delta 4 - 4$	0		0
$\Delta 3 - 3$	13		4
$\Delta 2 - 2$	2		0
$\Delta 1 - 1$	2		0
$\Delta -1$			
$\Delta 3 - 2$	1		0
$\Delta 2 - 1$	1		0
Missing	0		3

\*Percentage is calculated only for couples experiencing a positive shift in typology

states, When discussing problems, I usually feel my partner understands me, while item 58 suggests When we are having a problem, I can always tell my partner what is bothering me. In addition to the changes identified in the conflict resolution scale, other

Table 7  
Items with Greatest Change Between Time 1 and Time 2 \*\*

Item #	t-score change overall $\Delta$	$\Delta > 2$	ENRICH Category	Theme
10.	- 5.99	- 5.54	Conflict Resolution	Resolving disagreements
88.	- 5.71	- 4.94	Marital Satisfaction	Handle parental responsibility
98.	- 5.71	- 7.50	Communication	Do not share negative feelings
35.	- 5.56	- 3.90	Children and Parenting	Agree on discipline of children
81.	- 5.28	- 6.07	Communication	Partner misunderstand how I feel
39.	- 5.02	- 3.93	Conflict Resolution	My partner understands me
36.	- 4.85	- 5.11	Marital Satisfaction	Happy way we make decisions
58.	- 4.82	- 5.54	Conflict Resolution	Tell partner what is bothering me
112.	- 4.64	- 4.94	Conflict Resolution	Feel problem is my fault
66.	- 4.63	- 5.84	Communication	Partner willing to share feelings
5.	- 4.50	- 3.12	Children and Parenting	Father spends time with children
48.	- 4.48	- 5.02	Family and Friends	Partner too influenced by family
1.	- 4.38	- 4.14	Leisure Activities	Participate in activities of partner
106.	- 4.35	- 5.78	Sexual Relationship	Interest in sex is not same as mine
63.	- 4.34	- 5.56	Personalities Issues	My partner is too stubborn

\*(See Range Below)

\*.52 - -7.50 \*\*Significance of all items in the table are .001 or greater.

prominent shifts occurred within the communication scale. Table 7 includes a list of items reflecting the largest changes between Time 1 and Time 2. Items 98, ( $t = -5.71$ ,  $p < .001$ ), 81 ( $t = -5.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and 66 ( $t = -4.63$ ,  $p < .001$ ) all highlight changes in the couples' ability to converse with one another. For example, item 98 states I do not always

share negative feelings I have about my partner because I am afraid he/she will get angry, while item 81 suggests, Sometimes my partner does not understand how I feel. The change in the t-score for the three aforementioned items affirms couples increased ability to communicate and also feel more understood by his or her partner. Seeking to better understand the change in typology, researchers used t-tests to examine the differences in items when couples experienced a typological shift of two. Distinct from the overall analysis, differences in the communication and conflict resolution scores were larger in these couples. For example, in the overall analysis, the t-score for item 98 was -5.71 ( $p < .001$ ), while in the analysis of change greater than two the t-score was -7.50 ( $p < .001$ ), reflecting a greater shift in the couples' ability to communicate. Other comparisons between the overall analysis and the couples who experienced a change greater than two revealed more statistically significant differences in the communication and conflict resolution scales. The t-scores of item numbers 81, 58, 112 and 66, for example, were all larger in the change greater than two analyses than in the overall change analyses.

### *Hypothesis 2*

The second hypothesis explored the changes in PCA scores across time. Specifically, the researchers proposed that ENRICH PCA scores would be higher at completion of the marital enrichment program when compared to their own scores prior to program participation. Using a couple level analysis, t-tests compared the differences between Time 1 and Time 2 on the ENRICH scales. Significant differences were found for program participants between the two assessment points. Eight of the eleven categories were significant ( $p < .001$ ), including marital satisfaction, personality issues, communication, conflict resolution, finances, leisure activities, sexual relationship and

family and friends. Two ENRICH categories, religious orientation and children and parenting were also significant ( $t = -2.88$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $t = -2.50$ ,  $p < .05$ ), while equalitarian roles, was not significant. The analysis of the PCA scores are reported in Table 8.

Table 8  
Mean Score and T-Test Comparison of Positive Couple Agreement Scores

ENRICH Category	TIME		T-Score
	Time 1	Time 2	
Marital Satisfaction	59.3	78.4	- 5.49***
Personality	47.6	68.6	- 5.33***
Equalitarian Roles	48.9	54.3	- 1.85 ns
Communication	48.3	72.1	- 6.15***
Conflict Resolution	44.7	71.7	- 6.91***
Finances	58.2	77.9	- 5.81***
Leisure Activities	50.7	67.3	- 5.06***
Sexual Issues	71.5	85.1	- 4.12***
Children & Parenting	42.7	54.1	- 2.50*
Family & Friends	57.8	73.9	- 4.86***
Religious Orientation	80.4	89.5	- 2.88**

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$  \*\*\*  $p < .001$  ns = not significant

### *Hypothesis 3*

The third hypothesis suggested that couples who completed the marital enrichment program would have higher communication and conflict resolution scores compared to their own scores prior to participation in the program. Using t-tests, researchers analyzed the change in the couple's responses between Time 1 and Time 2 for the items in both the communication and conflict resolution categories of the ENRICH Inventory. Table 9 provides a complete listing of the items as well as the



change in means between the assessment periods. Examining the differences within the communication category, several items were significantly different between the two

Table 9  
ENRICH Communication Scale by Item

Item	Time		T-Score
	Time 1	Time 2	
2. It is very easy for me to express all my true feelings to my partner.	3.9	4.1	- 2.0*
6. When we are having a problem, my partner often gives me the silent treatment.	3.4	3.8	- 3.0**
40. My partner sometimes makes comments which put me down.	3.6	4.0	- 3.0**
54. I am sometimes afraid to ask my partner for what I want.	3.6	3.9	- 3.7***
66. I wish my partner was more willing to share his/her feelings with me.	2.9	3.5	- 4.6***
73. Sometimes I have trouble believing everything my partner tells me	4.2	4.4	- 2.0*
81. Sometimes my partner does not understand how I feel.	2.6	3.2	- 5.2***
91. I am very satisfied with how my partner and I talk to each other.	3.9	4.1	- 2.7**
98. I do not always share negative feelings I have about my partner because I am afraid he/she will get angry.	3.0	3.7	- 5.7***
109. My partner is always a good listener.	3.6	3.9	- 2.6**

\*p<.05 \*\*p<.01 \*\*\* p<.001

assessment periods. For example, the average score on item 98 was 3.0 at Time 1 and 3.7 at Time 2 ( $t = -5.7$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Similar differences were found on item numbers 81, where the means were 2.6 and 3.2 ( $t=-5.2$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and 66, in which means including 2.9 and 3.5 ( $t=-4.6$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Although having slightly smaller significance levels, other items within the communication scale were statistically different. For example, item numbers 6, 40, and 91 were statistically significant ( $p<.01$ ), reflecting shifts in the couple's patterns of interaction. More specifically, these items suggest increased satisfaction within the level of communication in the relationship. Accompanying the changes in the ENRICH communication scale were also changes in the conflict resolution items. T-tests revealed significant differences in the couple's responses after completion of the marital enrichment program. Eight of the 10 items in the conflict resolution scale demonstrated significant differences in the couples' ability to recognize and resolve conflict. While items 58, 71, 79, 83, 96 and 112 identified statistically significant differences, ( $p <.001$ ), the largest modifications between the Time 1 and Time 2 means were reflected in items 10 and 39. The difference in means for both of these items revealed partners' increased unity in resolving disagreements. The t-tests also revealed significant differences for items 4 and 74. However, the change in these items was smaller ( $p<.05$  and  $p<.01$ ) than in the aforementioned 8 items. All of the conflict resolution items as well as their t-scores are displayed in Table 10.

#### *Hypothesis 4*

The fourth and final hypothesis identified by researchers proposed that the couples who participated in the marital enrichment program would have higher marital satisfaction scores compared to their own scores prior to participation in the program. This hypothesis was explored using a variety of measures. First, the researchers examined

the demographic questionnaires to determine each partner's level of satisfaction and also how each member of the couple perceives his or her partner's satisfaction in the relationship. Prior to completion of the program, both 60.2% of men and women reported being extremely satisfied with their relationship. Similar percentages between the sexes

Table 10  
ENRICH Conflict Resolution Scale by Item

Item	Time		T-Score
	Time 1	Time 2	
4. In order to end an argument, I usually give in too quickly.	3.6	3.9	- 2.4*
10. My partner and I have different ideas about the best way to solve our disagreements.	3.1	3.7	- 5.9***
39. When discussing problems, I usually feel my partner understands me.	3.6	4.1	- 5.0***
58. When we are having a problem, I can always tell my partner what is bothering me.	3.6	4.0	- 4.8***
71. Sometimes we have serious disputes over unimportant issues.	2.7	3.1	- 3.5***
74. I go out of my way to avoid conflict with my partner.	3.2	3.4	- 2.6**
79. I sometimes feel our differences never seem to get resolved.	3.6	4.0	- 3.4***
83. To avoid hurting my partner's feelings during an argument, I tend not to say anything.	3.4	3.8	- 3.5***
96. At times, my partner does not take our disagreements seriously.	3.7	4.0	- 3.8***
112. When we argue, I usually end up feeling the problem was my fault.	3.3	3.8	- 4.6***

\* p<.05 \*\* p<.01 \*\*\* p<.001

were also found in other measures of satisfaction. For example, 28% of women and 30.2% of men reported being very satisfied with their marriage, while 10.8% of women and 8.6% of men were satisfied with the relationship. In the sample of 93 participants, 1.1% of women reported being somewhat dissatisfied with her marriage. Table 11 provides a complete list of self and partner satisfaction. Similar to the results described previously the partner's perceptions of the relationship were very similar. Once again 60.2% of men and 54.8% of women described their partners as extremely satisfied, while 28.0% of men and 31.2% of women identified their partners as very satisfied. Individuals reported lower levels of satisfaction for their partners than for themselves. For example 6.5% of men and 11.8% of women described their partner as satisfied. Finally, 2.2% of women and 1.1% of men identified their partner as somewhat dissatisfied.

Table 11  
Marital Satisfaction Time 1 – Study Couples and Control Group

Variables	Males		Females	
	Frequency	Percentages	Frequency	Percentages
	(n = 93)		(n = 93)	
<b>Marital Satisfaction</b>				
Somewhat Dissatisfied	0	0.0%	1	1.1%
Satisfied	8	8.6%	10	10.8%
Very Satisfied	28	30.2%	26	28.0%
Extremely Satisfied	56	60.2%	56	60.2%
Missing	1	1.1%	0	0.0%
<b>Partner Satisfaction</b>				
Somewhat Dissatisfied	1	1.1%	2	2.2%
Satisfied	6	6.5%	11	11.8%
Very Satisfied	26	28.0%	29	31.2%
Extremely Satisfied	56	60.2%	51	54.8%
Missing	4	4.3%	0	0.0%

At the conclusion of the marital enrichment program, the couple's perception of both self and partner satisfaction were different from the original assessment; however, these differences did not approach statistical significance ( $t = -.65, p > .05$ ).

Approximately 60% of both males and females reported being extremely satisfied with their marriage after completion of the program. A small percentage of both men and women (5.5% and 6.6% respectively) reported being satisfied with their relationship, while roughly 1/3 of participants described themselves as being very satisfied with their relationship. Table 12 describes the self reported satisfaction at completion of the marital enrichment program, while Table 13 articulates the statistical significance of 2 different assessment methods. The researchers also examined the differences between individual reports of partner satisfaction both before and after the completion of the marital enrichment program. The results of this analysis were not significant; therefore, they were not included in the study.

Table 12  
Marital Satisfaction Time 2 – Study Couples and Control Group

Variables	Male		Female	
	Frequency	Percentages	Frequency	Percentages
	(n = 91)		(n = 91)	
Marital Satisfaction				
Satisfied	3	5.5%	6	6.6%
Very Satisfied	31	34.1%	30	33.0%
Extremely Satisfied	55	60.4%	55	60.4%

Table 13  
Marital Satisfaction – Individual Scores at Time1 and Time 2

Item	Male		Male t-score	Female		Female t-score
	Time 1	Time 2		Time 1	Time 2	
Scale Items	37.9	41.2	- 4.59***	38.0	40.5	-3.23 ***
Questionnaire	4.5	4.5	- .30 ns	4.4	4.5	- .65 ns

\*\*\* p<.001 ns not significant

In addition to both self and partner perceptions of satisfaction as identified through the questionnaire, hypothesis 4 was also assessed through 2 additional analyses.

First, the researchers used t-tests to determine the overall change in the couple's response to the marital satisfaction items. The researchers then examined the items within the marital satisfaction scale which accounted for the overall shift in satisfaction. Briefly mentioned previously, neither the male nor female report of marital satisfaction, based upon the questionnaire data, reach statistical significance. However, a comparison of the marital satisfaction scale means was significant for both men ( $t=-4.59$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and women ( $t=-3.23$ ,  $p<.001$ ) following completion of the marital enrichment program.

The overall change in marital satisfaction for both men and women reflected changes in the means of items in the marital satisfaction scale. Nine of the 10 marital satisfaction items reached varying levels of statistical significance. Items 88, 36 and 113 were the most significantly different ( $p<.001$ ). Calculated by taking one item from each of the other ENRICH scales, the items reaching significance were diverse. For example, item 88 ( $t = -5.7$ ,  $p<.001$ ) discusses children and parenting, while 36 ( $t = -4.8$ ,  $p<.001$ ) was selected from the conflict resolution scale. Accompanying the changes in the aforementioned items, 6 additional items, 19, 32, 52, 53, 82 and 99 were also moderately significant ( $p<.01$ ). Table 14 reports the items within the marital satisfaction scale and the changes that occurred following completion of the marital enrichment program.

Table 14  
ENRICH Marital Satisfaction Scale by Item

Item	Time 1	Time 2	T-Score
14. I am not pleased with the personality characteristics and personal habits of my partner.	4.2	4.2	- .38 ns
19. I am very happy with how we handle role responsibilities in our marriage.	3.9	4.2	- 3.0**
32. I am not happy about our communication and feel my partner does not understand me.	3.9	4.2	- 2.9**
36. I am very happy about how we make decisions and resolve conflicts.	3.4	3.9	- 4.8***
52. I am unhappy about our financial position and the way we make financial decisions.	3.7	4.0	- 2.3**
53. I am very happy with how we manage our leisure activities and the time we spend together.	3.6	3.9	- 2.8**
82. I am very pleased about how we express affection and relate sexually.	3.8	4.1	- 2.8**
88. I am not satisfied with the way we handle our responsibilities as parents.	3.2	3.7	- 5.7***
99. I am satisfied about our relationship with my parents, in-laws, and/or friends.	3.8	4.1	- 3.6**
113. I feel good about how we each practice our religious beliefs and values.	3.9	4.3	- 3.5***

\*p<.05 \*\* p<.01 \*\*\* p<.001 ns = not significant

## Discussion

### *Summary*

The purpose of this study was to examine the changes associated with 14 week marital enrichment program on newly married couples. More specifically, the study sought to first summarize the efficacy of marital enrichment programs and to examine the typological shift that occurred as a result of completion of the program. The transition into marriage and the first few years of the marital relationship are crucial to development, health and stability of any marriage. The examination and synthesis of these three components, newly married couples, marital enrichment programs, and typological analysis, attempts to better describe human relationships and also design more appropriate, effective intervention strategies.

Marriages, or the creation of a new couple system, represent the unification of two individuals who possess distinct characteristics and family backgrounds. While often described as the honeymoon period, the first few years of marriage can represent one of the most turbulent times of the marital relationship. Demarcated by the negotiation of roles, the influence of family and outside systems, as well as decreases in marital satisfaction, the early years of marriage may represent the most propitious opportunity for marital intervention. Additionally, a better understanding of challenges that face newly married couples and of the most effective interventions is important in the creation of both successful, happy marriages and divorce prevention.



A variety of researchers have sought to capture and describe the various components of this research project; however, few have examined the association between typologies and new married couples' completion of a marital enrichment program. Marital enrichment programs have been successful in changing the interaction and characteristics of couples in various stages of the human life cycle. The examination of typologies adds an additional couple level analysis to the change that has taken place as a result of the enrichment program. Therefore, studying typological shifts among newly married couples will provide a different level of data than evaluating changes in the couple at the individual level. Using typologies established through previous studies, researchers are seeking to not only determine what typological shifts occur for newly married couples but to also describe the constituents of these changes as a means of designing more effective marital enrichment programs.

The purpose of this study was to summarize the effectiveness of a marital enrichment program on newly married couples and to also identify the typological shift in typological analysis across 2 assessment periods. Based on the couple's scores on the ENRICH Inventory, developed by Fowers and Olson (1993), researchers utilized 5 couple typologies including Devitalized, Conflicted, Traditional, Harmonious and Vitalized. The goal of this study was to examine the change in couple typology that occurs in newly married couples after completion of a marital enrichment program. Identifying typological shift and the changes that account for this shift in couples are two of the preliminary steps in designing marital enrichment programs that not only prevent divorce but also address the most vital aspects of the marital relationship.

By evaluating the typological shift that occurs in couple relationships, researchers, professionals and couples will have an increased understanding of not only the changes that have taken place in the couple relationship but also the elements within the typologies that account for the shift. Couples in the Devitalized or Conflicted categories have an immediate need for addressing various aspects of their relationship and may need to seek professional assistance in improving their relationship. In addition, typological analysis also provides professionals who are working with newly married couples with a greater amount of information regarding a couple's ability to communicate, express affection and parent within the marital relationship. As professionals gain additional information regarding satisfaction, communication and conflict resolution, they will be able to provide more effective intervention, tailoring marital enrichment programs to the most common needs of newly married couples. Creating marital enrichment programs that address the specific needs of newly married couples will not only prepare couples for the challenges they face during marriage but also prevent divorce.

### *Findings*

The findings of this study confirm support for the effectiveness of this marital enrichment program. Study couples demonstrated positive changes in couple typology and increased couple and individual enhancement following the program. Participant's ENRICH scores after completion of the enrichment program were significantly higher than prior to completion of the enrichment program. Examination of couple typology, individual and couple categories, as well as category items revealed statistically significant gains for many of the study couples.

### *Hypothesis 1.*

The assessment of hypothesis one revealed that Couple typology improved for couples participating in the marital enrichment program. Of the 93 couples, 57, (61.2%) experienced a positive shift of at least one in the typological analysis. The majority of these changes occurred as the couples shifted from traditional to vitalized. Further analysis of the category items revealed where the couples experienced the greatest area of change. Seven of the 15 items with the largest statistically significant difference were in either the communication or conflict resolution categories of the ENRICH Inventory. Couples who experienced a typological shift of two demonstrated the largest changes in the communication items. These findings are consistent with the primary emphasis of the program, as education concerning communication skills were foundational to the marital enrichment program in which the couples participated.

#### *Hypothesis 2.*

The study findings supported hypothesis two, as the number of PCA scores was higher after completion of the marital enrichment program. Similar to the results supporting the couple typological shift, the greatest changes in the number of PCA scores were found in the communication and conflict categories. While changes were made in ten of the eleven ENRICH categories, the study couple responses were not significantly different in the Equalitarian Roles category. There are several possible explanations as to why significant changes were not made in this category. First, the establishment of roles is one of the primary developmental tasks for newly married couples. Both partners may be strongly asserting their positions or also be attempting to define their marital relationship based previous experiences in their families of origin. Additionally, the couple's beliefs about roles in the marital relationship are also reflected in other ENRICH

categories including sexual relationship, children and parenting and communication. While statistically significant changes were found in the aforementioned categories, couples seeking to alter this domain of their relationship may need more than fourteen weeks for significant changes to be noted. Finally, couples may have a more unified definition of roles in their relationship after a longer period of marriage.

#### *Hypothesis 3.*

Hypothesis three further clarified the changes in communication and conflict resolution for couples after completion of the marital enrichment program. An analysis of the items revealed significant differences in the partner's communication with one another. Specifically, these items suggest that both members of the couple were able to not only better communicate their perspective and feelings with their partner but also felt more understood. Similar results were also found in the conflict resolution category, as the couples' scores continued to reflect increased understanding of their perspectives. Additionally, partners expressed greater consensus in how disagreements should be resolved and also reported feeling that problems were no longer defined as one partner's fault.

#### *Hypothesis 4.*

Researchers also found support for the final hypothesis, as both individual and couple marital satisfaction scores were higher after completion of the marital enrichment program. However not all of the measures for this analysis found increases in marital satisfaction. The questionnaire items were not significant for either males or females. One explanation for the lack of significance could be explained by the level of measurement. The answer choices on the background questionnaire do not provide specific gradations

or levels of satisfaction. For example an individual could have selected very satisfied both before and after completion of the enrichment program and experienced a shift that is not reflected because the category does not change. In the t-test analysis, researchers were able to better quantify and calculate the changes in scores on the items within the marital satisfaction category. This level of measurement provides a more objective, quantifiable assessment over the single questionnaire item.

When tested, the four hypotheses of this research study found support for the benefit of this marital enrichment program. Specifically, statistical significance suggests that this program benefits study group participants in the areas of communication, conflict resolution and marital satisfaction. In addition to support for this program, this study, using typological analysis, described the changes that couples experience as a result of their participation. Both categorical and item analysis identified the changes in couple scores that accounted for the shifts in typology. Using this information, couples will be better equipped to make changes within their relationships, and professionals will have the opportunity to design both more effective, couple specific interventions as well as more global marital enrichment programs that target the needs of newly married couples.

### *Limitations*

Three primary limitations are evident in this study of newly married couples. First, the study does not use a randomized control group but only a comparison group. This characteristic, along with the non-random selection of participants limits the internal validity of this study. In addition to the methodology used in this study, the unique

characteristics of the program participants may also limit generalizations to the larger population.

The second concern is that the sample is not ethnically diverse. The sample was primarily Caucasian, accounting for 96.2% of the total participants. Therefore the findings of this study may not hold true for individuals and couples of other ethnicities. Different typologies may arise as a result of completion of a marital enrichment program for individuals and couples of different ethnicities, as suggested by Allen and Olson (2001).

The final limitation of the study was that the data was taken from couples who were all enrolled in a small midwestern, Christian University. All of the subjects had completed high school and 68.2% associated themselves with the Christian denomination. 85.4% of the subjects were between the ages of 19 and 22 years old. The subjects volunteered for and enrolled in a class to participate in the program. Similar to ethnicity, the typologies found within this study may be different for couples of other religions, including agnostics or atheists, as well as people of different ages. As a result of these characteristics, the data obtained by this study may be different than findings for a random sample of newly married couples.

#### *Recommendations.*

Future research is needed to not only reiterate the findings of this study but to also continue to expand our current knowledge of the long-term change that can result from participation in marital enrichment programs. First, continued longitudinal follow-up of couples in this study, including one and three years analysis, will provide more information not only about the efficacy of the marital enrichment program but also about

the shifts in couple typology that occur across time. Longitudinal analysis would enable the researchers to determine what, if any, shifts occur in couple typology as the length of marriage increases. Researchers would have the opportunity to identify what categories and items within these categories are different at the follow-up assessment points and then determine what changes account for the shifts in typology across time. Using this information, professionals could then assess, create and tailor marital enrichment programs that both address a couple's needs and alter their interactional process, creating second order change.

In addition to continued analysis of the program participants, the use of a variety of assessment measures would also enhance the body of knowledge surrounding marital enrichment programs. In the design for this study the weekly interventions were created using the themes of the ENRICH categories. In addition to playing an active role in the intervention portion of the research design, the ENRICH also served as the assessment measure for both the pre and post test analysis. Using the ENRICH in both of these capacities potentially created an interaction effect in the current project. While continuing to utilize the ENRICH, future research could include a variety of assessment measures, particularly in the treatment portion of the enrichment program, to diminish the interaction effect that exists within this study.

Future research should also be conducted so that the results of the study may be generalized to a larger population. Increasing ethnic diversity and variation in educational background and the age of the participants would enable this study to be a truer representation of the population. The aforementioned changes, as well as increases in religious diversity, could be accomplished through different means. First, the marital

enrichment programs could be conducted at a variety of locations, rather than at a midwestern Christian University. Another recommendation would include the comparison of study group couples to either the national ENRICH sample or the creation of a control group, rather than a comparison group, with demographic characteristics similar to that of the study couples. The introduction of a control group would provide more contrast between the study and control participants, allowing researchers to more definitively discern the efficacy of the marital enrichment program. A comparison of program to the national ENRICH sample of couples may provide insight into more global patterns or trends seen in newly married couples.

Finally, research suggests that premarital couples have high social desirability. One hypothesis suggests that social desirability could also be high among newly married couples. Future research should address the influence of social desirability on couple typology and change.



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## VITA

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